



**Board Members Present**

Beth Bray (Chair)  
Jill Robinson Kramer (Vice-Chair)  
Violet Hawkins  
Michael Jasaitis  
Anna Shults  
Rev. David W. Greene, Sr.

**Board Members Absent**

Rep. Terri Austin

**Staff**

James Betley  
Bridgett Abston  
Ryan Preston  
Sherie Scott  
Beatriz García

**NOTICE OF MEETING AND AGENDA**

**May 21, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. ET**  
**Indiana Government Center South – Conference Room C**  
**302 W Washington Street**  
**Indianapolis, IN 46204**

**Meeting Link:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@indianacharterschoolboard6660>  
<https://www.youtube.com/@StateOfIndianaProductions>

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All public meetings of the Indiana Charter School Board are accessible to persons with disabilities. For persons who are hearing impaired or deaf and who require interpreter services for the meeting, notify Beatriz García in writing by email at [Bgarcia@icsb.in.gov](mailto:Bgarcia@icsb.in.gov) or by telephone at (317) 232-7585. Notification must be made at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. For persons who are visually impaired or blind and who require large-print or Braille copies of materials to be distributed at the meeting, please contact the person listed above at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.

## Meeting Minutes for May 21, 2024

### I. Call to Order/Board Meeting Minutes Approval

- a. Call to Order
  - i. Board Chair Beth Bray called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. ET
- b. Approval of Board Minutes (December 12, 2023)
  - i. Board Member David Greene motioned to accept the December 12, 2023 Board minutes.
  - ii. Board Member Michael Jasaitis seconded the motion. Board Members Beth Bray, Jill Robinson-Kramer, Violet Hawkins, Michael Jasaitis, Anna Shults, and David Greene voice voted aye.
  - iii. Board Member Terri Austin was absent.
  - iv. Motion passes with six ayes and zero nays.

### II. Board Business

- a. **Indy STEAM Academy – Charter Revocation**
  - i. Presentation of staff recommendation (5-7 minutes)
    1. Executive Director, James Betley, provided a brief overview of the charter revocation recommendation for Indianapolis STEAM Academy.
    2. The staff recommendation is to revoke the charter.
  - ii. Presentation of request by organizer (8-10 minutes)
    1. Dr. Yvonne Bullock provided an overview of the school model and a summary of difficulties throughout the school's existence.
  - iii. Public Comment Period
    1. Dr. Rose Lee, Board President for Indy STEAM Academy: To give you a little history about myself: I'm retired 38 years, but I've never stopped working. I had 44 years in education and I've done everything except be a Superintendent. I retired as assistant Superintendent. I came on the board with Doctor Bullock and then we had that catastrophe where everyone left and of course I had to stay on because this is in my heart. It means a lot. As the board chair, I want to read the letter that we composed because the other board members couldn't be here.
      - a. Dear Indiana Charter School Board,  
As a board, we could not agree to surrender the charter academy for closing. The situation really saddens us. I can honestly say to the best of our ability, the board completed tasks asked of us to do. Mr. Bentley did give us praise as a Board for doing things in a timely manner. The past mistakes are in the past and the future can be brighter for the academy. This board made a commitment to Indy STEAM Academy. At this point, we are asking that you look at what has improved and focus on the students, parents and staff to allow Indy STEAM Academy to remain open for the 2024-25 school year. The board has worked cooperatively with Dr. Bullock and all others to improve situations that were not working as well as could be in the past. Efforts to improve past efficiencies were all made. Please base your decision on what is best for students,

parents and staff of Indy STEAM Academy and not focus on past situation.

That's from the board as a whole. When you keep doing the same thing, you get the same results. As we can see what has been happening, but as a board we want to continue having a chance to be able to work with Mr. Betley, Dr. Bullock and all others to continue improving the dynamics of Indy STEAM Academy. You have a different board here and we need a chance. I mean, I am here for the long run. Just give the chance. Things were allowed to keep going and keep going. That's not going to happen here. I'm a hard worker. I'm in education and my heart is going out to these students and parents, and the teachers. But I thought when we came on and we started working and I, I do what people tell me to do when I get an assignment, I do it and I know I've done the best I could and our Board with the things Mr. Betley has asked of us. I think it's all about compliance. Dr. Bullock wants to do everything. She loves these kids, she loves teaching, but I have to slow her down. You can't do it all by yourself, but when you get a group of people that you can work with, anything could be done. Give us the chance. This is a new board. The past is gone. Give us a chance. Give us this one year to make a difference and we can. We've already started everything Mr. Betley said. Give us the autonomy. You can't change what's happened. You can improve it. And that's what we are asking. This board is dedicated. I can talk to Dr. Bullock. I tell her like it is. I don't have a problem with that. We work together well, I work with the other people. The whole board does. If you could just see our board, we work so well because it is about the children, the children, these parents and the teachers. But know this, this Board here is dedicated. That's all I can say. Just give us a chance and I know Mr. Betley can say he has seen something different. When I get these orders, it's done. Because I know what's supposed to be done. It's done because it's a reflection of me and I take my job seriously as this board chair. And I could go on and on, but I'm just telling you, you have a dedicated board here. We listen, we make changes. And I know Mr. Betley could tell you. We read the emails, we do the work, and we're here to do this work. We're just asking. Give us that one year to prove ourselves. It will not be the same with this board and it hasn't been since we took over. We network and I can just give you my word on that because my word is all I have. And I thank you so much for your time.

2. Tricia Blum, School Consultant: I am Tricia Blum. Progress over perfection. We've all heard it before. Surprisingly today when I walked in, it's printed on the wall walking down. And I think that's a important to keep in mind as we talk about Indy STEAM. Again, my name is Tricia Blum. I am a consultant working with Indy STEAM. I am not the consultant that came in last year. I'm a new consultant that came in this year. Prior to working with Indy STEAM I've worked with over 56 charter schools and charter management organizations across the United States some of them with budgets of 350

million. Some of them with budgets much less. I specialize in compliance, operations, finance, and governance. I have had the honor of working with Indy STEAM since 2021. Dr. Bullock's leadership and commitment to our students, staff and community is beyond compare. I request that you let Indy STEAM learn. Again, progress over perfection. It has recognized its previous shortcomings. It's provided a 96 page comprehensive plan to you all and has addressed many, many of the issues. This plan not only meets, but in many cases exceeds requirements. It demonstrates a clear commitment to accountability and transparency. Two pillars essential for the success and integrity of an educational institution. The school has implemented rigorous monitoring systems to ensure commitment to continued adherence to these standards. These systems include regular audits and the establishment of a compliance officer role dedicated solely to maintaining these standards. Such steps illustrate a proactive and structured approach to compliance promising a stable and compliant operational future. I understand that there are reservations and that they come from past performance, but it is also crucial to acknowledge when an institution not only corrects its course but sets new standards for itself. It no longer needs financial support from Grow Schools. It is working through all of the compliance matters that have been cited. There is a change in operational structure. So rejecting the turnaround plan might not only undermine the significant efforts made by the dedicated staff and administration, but it also disregards the needs and futures of students who have chosen the institution as a pathway for their success. Again, I'm not going to continue. You understand the idea, but it is progress over perfection. I think you should allow Indy STEAM to continue and allow its students to continue to learn thank you.

3. Princess Bandards, Student parent: Hello, I'm going to keep this very brief. I'm going to talk in bullet points since we are on limited time. My son has a is a special education student. The compliance at Indy STEAM is a huge issue. Huge issue. I know we're hearing. Ohh, it's about the children. Exactly because it's about the children, we have an obligation to protect them and the compliance at this school is not acceptable at all. Like at all. It started out with we had an out-of-state IEP when we came to the school. The top staff member told me that out-of-state IEP's were not accepted. Me not knowing any better, I believed that. So I thought when are we going to have a meeting. For two months almost, my son went without an IEP and because of that he was suspended multiple times. He wasn't getting his services that he was supposed to get. A lot of things just continued to happen. Only for me to find out that not only are they supposed to accept, but they are supposed to immediately enforce an out-of-state IEP. I was also told that a functional behavior plan had been started for him and that it was in place. We find out about three or four months later because he keeps having issues and being suspended and put out of school a ridiculous amount of time, come to find out that was never done and this could have all been prevented. His education as well as his esteem are being compromised. With the outright refusal to follow special education guidelines, I'm surprised the school doesn't have a lawsuit. Multiple of them.

It's something I've never seen before. Without saying names again, I was told during CCC (Case Conference Committee) meetings by the top staff member that they don't care about my son's BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan) nor his disabilities. That was told to me, my mom, his TOR (Teacher of Record) at the time and his homeroom teacher. So this is not something I'm making up. It was said in front of key people and this is about him by the top staff member. The one who said that. I filed at least eight DOE (Department of Education) complaints for noncompliance and all, but I believe one of them has come back as founded because the school is just outright not following the rules. I personally witnessed multiple of my son's special education teachers, because he turnover rate is crazy, but I have had at least three, every single one out of their own mouths, I have witnessed them tell the top staff member that they are not in compliance and this is not how it's supposed to go. It is completely ignored and they're like demeaned and told basically to sit in your place. Where they are trying to sit in their place and follow the rules. The DOE has corrective action timeline requirements that have not been followed. There have been some that have been re-sent out and told like, hey, you did not comply with this yet, you need to do it. There's been at least two of those for that one, and that's the most recently. Beforehand, they were being followed to the most part. They still weren't following the rules, but they were at least following the timeline guidelines for the corrective actions. Uh, but here recently it's not being done. I was contacted by multiple staff members at the at the school saying that my son is being targeted and mistreated by top staff member. He's come home crying multiple times saying that the top staff member is mean to him and he doesn't know why she doesn't like him. He's spoken to his therapist about this. He's been suspended from school or the bus at least 20 days, not including his most recent bus expulsion. And again, these are due to the rules not being followed. If they were being followed, all these suspensions and things would not have been happening. So he's losing a lot of education and it's really affecting his esteem because he thinks something's wrong with him. But the truth is you're not getting the help that you need. And this is only me because I take the time to look into the rules. So many parents don't even know what rules to look into. So they just take their student out and they move on. And but I'm just like, no, that's not going to happen. It could make it worse for my son to move on. I was told by a key member of administration that they had spoken to the top staff member that they had spoken to members of the board of directors and that that they decided that since the school can't be my son special needs, it's time for me to find a new school for him. And that was said very rudely, almost as if move on and get over it. And then also due to the mistreatment, there is an open civil rights case due to disability discrimination against the school and this was found all the way back, I believe in October. I've been told multiple times by the Department of Education for the Civil Rights side that the school is not complying with their investigation. They have requested multiple times for them to submit information and the school is just outright refusing to comply. They'll say oh we'll do it. They do not have it. Last time I spoke with them, which was within the last month, they said

they have still not gotten that information from the school and they're considering what next steps including possibly pulling funding due to that. Also, the administrator staff the way they are treated. Again, I am surprised there are not multiple lawsuits. They have every right to file lawsuits. It is outright bullying. If you look up the definition they are being bullied. I would say in this is an estimation at least 75% of administrative staff have quit this year. You guys should look into this. I've witnessed them being mistreated and say don't speak to them like that. Most of them have called me crying after they quit and said they had to quit just because they can't deal with that and how they're treated and it's not okay. They're just trying to do their job. So a lot of the staff are great but the top staff member is a huge problem.

4. Kimberly Brown, Student Grandparent: Good morning, my name is Kimberly Brown. I'm a grandmother of a student at the school. And to sit back and watch my grandson be mistreated, is hard to hear him come home and mention there were drugs at school. There were drugs on the bus. Parents have not been notified. Students have been misplaced, literally dropped off at the wrong bus stop when inquired about it, "Oh we'll send notice to the parents". Parents have not been notified. My son witnessed another child look up a girl's skirt and we were told, "That's not what happened". This is what the child came home and told us. Parents are not being notified about anything that's going on at the school.
5. Brittany Gordon, Teacher at Indy STEAM Academy: I am a 4th grade teacher at Indy STEAM. I just want to highlight that I came this year. 14 out of the 17 students were about three years behind. We have gotten that number down. In my classroom to six, I have 3 kids that are now that we're two years behind that are now above grade level. I have two of those students here and I just would like them to just give a little overview of how school is for them. And how it started. She was low motivation. A lot of issues outside of the home. So when she started school, you know when you're taking a test, you're just clicking through and through clicking through. She tested at a kindergarten level. But we knew her brain wasn't kindergarten level, right? So pouring into her are pouring into her, pouring into her. What you pour in, if you pour enough of it in, it overflows out. She is now #1 in the class. She's testing, probably about at a fifth grade level. And that was the motivation poured in her. Yes, I teach the skill, but it was more so the love that was pouring into her. The encouragement, crying on weekends. Fridays would come, not wanting to go home because she loves school so much. So my goal was not about making sure they mastered what was in the books, but more so mastering who they were. And I think I did that.
  - a. In school we usually learn about more than a 4<sup>th</sup> grader would usually learn. My teacher has taught us way more than we need to learn in the books, but more of what we need to learn about outside this world. And what goes on when we grow up and how we go be the person we want to be and how we achieve those goals The Five P's of Success are proper preparation prevents poor performance. Stay ready so you don't have to get ready.



- b. **The Excel Center Bartholomew County and The Excel Center Grant County – Charter Activation**
- i. Presentation of staff recommendations (5-7 minutes)
    - 1. Executive Director, James Betley, provided a brief overview of the charter activation applications for the Excel Center Bartholomew County and for the Excel Center Grant County.
    - 2. The staff recommendation is to approve both charter activations for a seven-year charter for each school.
  - ii. Presentation of request by organizer (8-10 minutes)
    - 1. Betsy Delgado, Chief Mission and Education Officer for Goodwill Education Initiatives, introduced the Excel Centers Team and Katie Bustamante, Vice President of Education. Ms. Bustamante gave an overview of the network and mission. Ms. Delgado spoke on the recent return on investment study conducted by the Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) at Notre Dame University.
  - iii. Question and answer period
    - 1. Board Member Hawkins asked if she could get a copy of the LEO study report. She also said she did not hear Ms. Bustamante reference the Excel Center South Bend during the network overview. Mr. Betley responded that the Excel Center South Bend is led by Goodwill LEADS not Goodwill Education Initiatives. Mr. Betley said he would email the LEO study report. Board Member Hawkins asked if the report included the Excel Center South Bend. Ms. Delgado confirmed it did.
    - 2. Board Member Shultz said she was surprised to see opposition from the district superintendents, education coalitions, and the local United Way. She asked how the organizer will mend the relationships or collaborate with those community members/organizations. Ms. Delgado said the organization began the community relationship building late and that they are continuously meeting with those partners. Ms. Betley said most of the opposition was from the local adult basic education (ABE) program. He went on to say that the Bartholomew County program (ABE) seemed to be more vocal and that the services offered between the Excel Center and the adult basic education (ABE) program are fundamentally different.
  - iv. Board decision for the Excel Center Bartholomew County
    - 1. Board Member Greene moved to accept the staff recommendation of a seven-year charter activation. Board Member Jasaitis seconded the motion.
    - 2. Board Members Bray, Robinson-Kramer, Hawkins, Jasaitis, Shults, and Greene voice voted aye.
    - 3. Board Member Austin was absent.
    - 4. Motion passed with six yeses and zero nays.
  - v. Board decision for the Excel Center Grant County
    - 5. Board Member Greene moved to accept the staff recommendation of a seven-year charter activation. Board Member Jasaitis seconded the motion.
    - 6. Board Members Bray, Robinson-Kramer, Hawkins, Jasaitis, Shults, and Greene voice voted aye.
    - 7. Board Member Austin was absent.
    - 8. Motion passed with six yeses and zero nays.



**c. GEO Next Generation Academy – Expansion Request**

- i. Presentation of staff recommendation (5-7 minutes)
  1. Executive Director, James Betley, provided a brief overview of the charter expansion request for GEO Next Generation Academy.
  2. The staff recommendation is to approve the expansion request from a grade seven through twelve school to a kindergarten through grade twelve school.
- ii. Presentation of request by organizer (8-10 minutes)
  1. Dana Teasley, President of GEO Academies, provided a brief overview of the expansion request for GEO Next Generation Academy
- iii. Question and answer period
  1. Vice Chair Robinson Kramer asked whether staff and students were interested in staying at the new, proposed school. Her concern is sustainability for the network. Ms. Teasley responded that the organizer has not approached students or staff of Indy STEAM Academy because prior to the current Board meeting, the aforementioned school still had a charter. However, since Genius School's relocation has been very public, GEO Academies has spoken to the Genius School leadership about enrollment and staff transition. The organizer plans to expand their marketing and meet with current student families. GEO Academies recently received a federal start up grant that will support this expansion.
- iv. Board decision
  1. Board Member Greene moved to accept the expansion recommendation for GEO Next Generation Academy. Board Member Hawkins seconded the motion.
  2. Board Members Bray, Hawkins, Jasaitis, and Greene voice voted aye.
  3. Vice Chair Robinson Kramer voice noted nay.
  4. Board Member Shults recused herself.
  5. Board Member Austin was absent.
  6. Motion passed with four yeases and one nay.

**III. Staff Updates**

- a. The 2024 ICSB Annual Charter School Conference will take place on June 13, 2024 at James and Rosemary Phalen Leadership Academy in Indianapolis.

**IV. Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

- a. Board Member Greene motioned to adjourn. Board Member Jasaitis seconded the motion.
- b. Board Members Bray, Robinson-Kramer, Hawkins, Jasaitis, Shults, and Greene voice voted aye.
- c. Board Member Austin was absent.
- d. Motion passes with six ayes and zero nays.
- e. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 10:55 a.m. ET.